

# Watch Your Head!

By Ltjg. Joseph E. Parke

Sometimes it's OK to tell on yourself. I was in the port helo hangar doing a pilot weekly inspection. One of the inspections required removal of the tail-rotor, drive-shaft cowlings. I completed all the items for the tail rotors I could and asked one of the maintainers to remove the cowlings. After completing some maintenance paperwork, I continued my inspections.

The ship was engaged in DIVTACS in a moderate sea state, and we were experiencing some pitch and roll but nothing out of the ordinary.

While perched atop the tail pylon, on greasy steps, with flashlight, pen, and clipboard in hand, I heard the hangar door open. "Oh shoot," I thought; that may be the maintenance chief. I had forgotten to put on a cranial before climbing 10 feet up the tail. Not wanting to incur the wrath of our maintenance chief, I scampered down the tail, nonchalantly strolled past the chief, and looked for the proper PPE.

There was no harm, no foul. However, in retrospect, I narrowly avoided a couple of hazards. First, though I did don a cranial my first trip up the tail, I had enough on my mind to distract me from wearing it on the second trip. Do not let multi-tasking cloud your situational awareness.

Second, after you've been out to sea for a couple of months and daily tasks become easier, do not let complacency take over. Even though you have a little experience, no aviator is absolved from the responsibility of

ensuring a safe working environment—for himself and every shipmate.

Third, scampering down the tail was not my smartest course of action. Do not let fear of error or retribution propel you into a medical appointment or a dangerous situation. We were fortunate to have a maintenance chief who promotes safety enough for us to check ourselves at the very thought of his presence. 🦅

Ltjg. Parker flies with HSL-42.

